

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: February 1, 2005

CALLED TO ORDER: 5:04 p.m.

ADJOURNED: 5:35 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

ATTENDING MEMBERS

Greg Bowes, Chair
Patrice Abduallah
Rozelle Boyd
Ginny Cain
Susie Day

ABSENT

Joanne Sanders
Scott Schneider

AGENDA

PROPOSAL NO. 27, 2005 - establishes a nonreverting donation fund and petty cash fund for the Marion County Children's Guardian Home
"Do Pass" Vote: 5-0

Presentation from the Marion County Commission on Youth (MCCOY) – John Brandon

Community Affairs Committee

The Community Affairs Committee of the City-County Council met on Tuesday, February 1, 2005. Chair Greg Bowes called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. with the following members present: Patrice Abdullah, Rozelle Boyd, Susie Day, and Ginny Cain. Absent were Joanne Sanders and Scott Schneider.

PROPOSAL NO. 27, 2005 - establishes a nonreverting donation fund and petty cash fund for the Marion County Children's Guardian Home

Rose Butler, Director of the Marion County Children's Guardian Home, stated that the Home Allowance Fund needs to be moved to enable the fund to be maintained under the county. She also stated that the Home Allowance Fund will still be the Guardian Home's Petty Cash Fund. Currently the Home Allowance Fund monies come directly to the Guardian Home. The monies are deposited and spent as directed by the donors. The commissioners receive a quarterly report on how these funds are being spent. All monies will be solely for the Guardian Home's use for the children. Donors will understand that the money is not going in the County General Fund. On occasion, there are undesignated donations used to help off-set what may not be covered in the Budget, such as computers, staff training, state police checks (which total about \$400), emergency food and medical needs, as well as physical plant repairs.

Councillor Boyd asked Ms. Butler if they get funds for particular purposes (outside of the normal flow) that are not subject to Council appropriations. He also asked what the Council's role is and if the Council has any oversight. He also stated if the Council is not involved in the appropriation process; the Guardian Home has responsibilities to the community, regardless of the source of funding. Tavonna Harris, attorney for the Marion County Children's Guardian Home, stated that the Council would not have any control over the funds placed in this account. The Guardian Home is a charitable organization into which any donor may donate money for any purpose designated. The Guardian Home needed to get an account set up that would allow it to place the funds into it that would have some sort of county control and would use the same check and balance system that the City-County agencies have. The Mayor, by executive order, gave control of the Guardian Home to the Board of Commissioners a number of years ago, and the Board would control the system. Ms. Harris stated that in order to put a check and balance system in place, there is a Petty Cash Fund set up, giving the director access to only \$3,500 at a time. It also gives the City-County Council the benefit of knowing the balance in that fund.

Councillor Abdullah asked Ms. Butler how much money is in this particular fund at any given time. Ms. Butler stated that it varies. In 2004, the fund had about \$12,000, but then the Guardian Home received a bequest that put the amount over \$100,000.

Councillor Cain asked if this is a way of being accountable when you have large sums of money in the fund. Ms. Harris agreed stating that when donors donate more, we want to

make sure there is a check and balance system in place, not only to protect the Guardian Home, but to protect the Director and Assistant Director as well.

Councillor Abdullah asked if the fund earns any interest. Ms. Butler stated that she is not sure at this time.

Chairman Bowes asked if the one purpose of setting up this fund is to protect those donors who want to make designated gifts. He also asked if it will be used only for the Guardian Home. Ms. Butler stated that designated gifts have been honored in the two years she has been at the Guardian Home.

Chairman Bowes asked if there is a legal way to honor those restrictions and if the check and balance system is in the form of quarterly reporting that is required. Ms. Harris responded in the affirmative. She stated that it has been made clear to Ms. Butler and Mr. Peddie that there were not any problems when it came to establishing the fund. Everything was done in order, and the proper reports were given to the Board of Commissioners.

Councillor Boyd moved, seconded by Councillor Abdullah, to send Proposal No. 27, 2005 to the full Council with a "Do Pass" recommendation. The motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

Presentation from the Marion County Commission on Youth (MCCOY) – John Brandon

John Brandon, President of the Marion County Commission on Youth (MCCOY), explained that the Marion County Commission on Youth (MCCOY) is an independent, not-for-profit youth service approved by the Coalition for Indy Kids, which is a source of private providers of Child Welfare Services in the community. They were asked to manage a project for the Child Welfare System, and the Lilly Endowment has generously funded and supported this work. The Commission has worked closely with the Marion County Superior Court, Juvenile Division, as well as the Marion County Office of Family and Children and a variety of private service providers.

Mr. Brandon stated that oftentimes the Child Welfare Service gets attention from the community when something goes wrong. The Commission's goal is to take a look inside the community and determine what can be done. In the 1990s through early 2000, many organizations came together as a result of budget issues and formed a project called Child Adolescent Placement Project. This resulted in more services being provided within the community, keeping the children home and reducing overall costs to the Welfare System.

Mr. Brandon stated that this system and its employees are overworked. One of his hopes is that the project can begin to strongly stress a prevention message to families. He also stated that there are a lot of people doing good, innovative work at various levels in the community are effective and efficient, saving public and private dollars.

Mr. Brandon stated that the community needs to be more involved through a Community Stakeholders Group. These individuals from the community, who have worked for the Child Welfare System, are willing to learn how to find funding to meet the needs of the children. He also stated that the Neighborhood Alliance for Childhood Safety (NACS) tries to identify at-risk families to begin to work with them in trying to prevent them from having

to enter the welfare system. He also stated that the community needs to become more family-centered.

Mr. Brandon stated that public dollars are the primary funding source for many services, and those public dollars are limited. He also stated that private dollars needed to be attracted. He said that he would be happy to receive any ideas and feedback, as well as some direction from the committee in making this program happen. The work groups are formed and will begin their process in mid-February and have a target date for the Action Plan to be laid the middle of April.

Councillor Abdullah asked how this plan would impact welfare as they know it in strengthening families and how much of an impact this would be in reducing the number of families that were placed in the welfare system. Mr. Brandon stated that the Family and Social Services Administration 2003 Child Fatality Report tells of the factors regarding the death of every one of those children. Some of the common issues regarding those factors are substance abuse, family economics, and poor parenting skills. He also stated that there is a need to factor a way to address those issues, strengthen those families, and educate them in the challenges and rewards of being a parent by convincing them to make better choices.

Councillor Abdullah asked if there was an accurate number of people that will be affected in a positive way by these programs. Mr. Brandon stated that the Neighborhood Alliance for Childhood Safety (NACS) has helped over 500 families in five years. Once they get a family and begin to provide them with services and support, the likelihood for that family again having difficulties is reduced significantly.

Chairman Bowes stated that it is hard to measure preventive programs. Mr. Brandon stated that he believes that the best measure will be a declining number of children entering the system. Currently, the trend shows an increase of 5 to 10% per year. The problems these families are facing have also increased. He stated that he will provide NACS data at a later date.

Councillor Boyd asked if the information from the presentation is referencing what is going on across the nation. Mr. Brandon answered in the affirmative and will also provide that data to the committee.

Chairman Bowes thanked Mr. Brandon for his presentation and stated that the committee is looking forward to hearing more from him.

With no further business pending, and upon motion duly made, the Community Affairs Committee of the City County Council was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Greg Bowes, Chair
Community Affairs Committee

GB/lw